

## WORKING WORLD

### Careers in International Education, Exchange and Development

By Sherry L. Mueller and Mark Overmann  
Georgetown University Press, 2008



BOOK NOTES

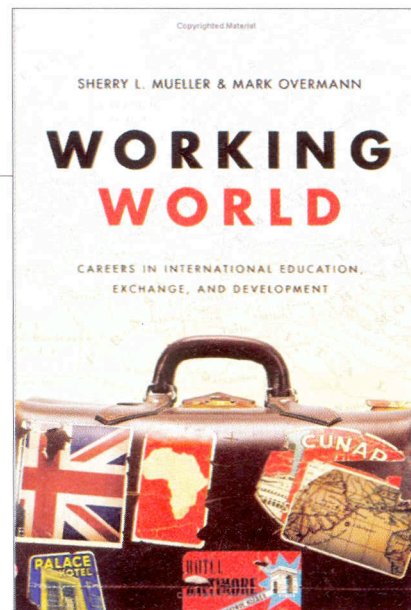
THE UNCERTAINTY of this time is impacting the global workforce, altering the career aspirations of students soon to graduate; those

who have recently graduated are often the first to be let go in hard times. In my work at SAIS, I face these concerns on a daily basis. Everyone is thinking about their present job security, imagining alternatives if the worst were to happen, and perhaps beginning to consider a change of field or sector. The publication of *Working World* is very timely—especially for young professionals and those just starting their careers. When NAFSA published a book with a similar focus a decade ago by Sherry Mueller, it filled a void. I don't believe that NAFSA had ever before published book that addressed important issues about professional development and career advancement for international educators. The format of this new volume includes profiles and informal interviews conducted with experienced professionals in all fields; it discusses a range of key career issues and dilemmas; and provides an excellent listing in its chapters of both print and online resources. It is a very good book that I think should be part of every campus career services library. Any young international education professional contemplating a career change or transition to another field will benefit from reading the book.

I've known Mueller's work in Washington, D.C., for several decades, and her interest in career development issues dates back to the "Roundtables on Careers in International Education and Exchange," which she first began at the Institute of

International Education (IIE) in 1982 and then, a few years later, involved well-known NAFSA staffers Archer Brown and Loren-da Schrader. As the more experienced coauthor (or "career veteran" as she puts it), Mueller writes with a deep understanding of the nonprofit field and an exceptional—and sensitive—perspective on the issues that impact the professional development of staff, as well as the functional career development issues affecting anyone seeking a career in the field of international education, exchange, and development (although I think the discussion of the development field is not the book's strong suit). Co-author Overmann is a young professional mentored by Mueller while working at the National Council for International Visitors (where she is executive director) in Washington, D.C. His candid voice in the narrative adds value and perspective to readers just starting their careers and trying to sort out their career direction.

The book is organized in two parts: the first on "Shaping your Career Philosophy" and the second on conducting a job search and "Selected Resources." I found the discussion of topics in Part I essential to any job seeker; the topics covered include: the importance of identifying a cause, networking, seeking a mentor and crafting a career story; all are written in a sensible and nontechnical manner and particularly informed by Mueller's lengthy management experience with leading nonprofit organizations. I especially appreciated the emphasis placed on taking time to gain focus and understand what motivates a job seeker choosing to work in the education, exchange, and development fields. The introduction is aptly titled, "Idealists Pre-



ferred." It is essential to start a career in our field with a clear understanding of what trade-offs there are on many personal and professional levels. Jumping to their conclusion, they write: "Thinking of your career as the way you will be of service to those around you is the best advice we can offer." The work we do is not suited to everyone's personality, value orientation, or life goals. I agree that to succeed in our business, in the long-run, getting it right at the outset is a key to building the foundation for a rewarding and successful career.

In Part II, the authors introduce their approach to the job search process with a brief and realistic overview. Consider this section a useful primer and outline of how to get started, the pitfalls to avoid, the resources that can provide both access to jobs and internships, and insights gleaned from the careers of many successful professionals in a variety of fields. This is where you'll find resources identified for all the major fields and sectors in the nonprofit, public, and private sectors and in the U.S. government and multilateral institutions as well. This section tries to say many things—often in a few paragraphs—about many types of organizations, and in the process, some of the introductions to each field are too brief and general.

Students and professionals will need to conduct more background research to gain a deeper understanding of current



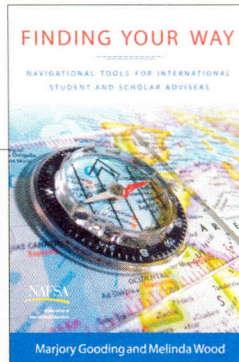
hiring trends and the nuances required to successfully network and find employment. A good example is the brief discussion about multinational organizations. What is missing is any mention of the importance that nationality plays in hiring at the development banks and within the UN system—U.S. citizens are not always able to find positions.

The last chapter, concerning international business, consulting, and research, understates the complexities of finding work in these fields. In particular, the development consulting industry will rarely hire anyone for an entry-level job without a master's degree, several years of experience, and often prefers those who have worked in the developing world. In fact, the consulting firm Chemonics, for exam-

ple, is the only firm in the Washington, D.C. area that provides a structured entry-level employment program for young professionals in this industry.

*Working World* deserves to be widely read and discussed. I would also recommend that it be kept on bookshelves alongside the equally useful and similarly structured volume, *Careers in International Affairs* by Maria Carland and Lisa Ghring (also published by Georgetown University Press). This book, while a bit dated, provides much more in-depth analysis of many of the same industries discussed in *Working World*.

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A complementary title for those looking for career resources from NAFSA is *Finding Your Way, Navigational Tools for International Student and Scholar Advisers*. This book is designed to give the essential tools to international educators so they can jump-start and make the most of their careers. As well as a being resource for practical advice and information including skill sets, mindsets, problem-solving, advocacy, and building ally networks that can help on a daily basis, it can also help frame the day-to-day issues faced by professionals in the field in broader contexts. Each chapter has follow-up activities and a resource list. Order online at [www.nafsa.org/publications](http://www.nafsa.org/publications) or call 1.866.538.1927.

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